



My School ! Idaho Charter School Link

My first 2 months at the Idaho State Department of Education have been energizing and exciting. I continue to be impressed by the level of commitment and the service the Department is providing to support all of Idaho's school children—and in particular, Idaho's charter school students.

In order to meet State Department goals of sustaining and promoting quality and growth in Idaho's charter schools, as well as to effectively meet federal Charter School Program grant performance objectives, we have initiated three new programs:

1. Charter Start!

The new *Charter Start!* program is being developed in partnership with the Idaho Charter School Net-

work. The program will provide benchmarks and more targeted assistance for charter developers during school planning and implementation phases. New Vision Planning grants will be available to charter developers.

2. Leadership Councils:

Charter School Leadership Councils have been established in each region of the state. Council goals are: Networking: Collaborate with charter school leaders and statewide organizations committed to charter schools, and develop an action plan to promote growth and quality among Idaho's charter schools.

Growth: Develop and support quality options for all of Idaho's children. Determine essential needs of

Idaho charters. Identify opportunities for the future.

Messaging: Brand the "look and feel" of school choice in Idaho.

3. Quality Indicators:

The SDE is partnering with the Northwest Regional Education Lab to do an in-depth examination of the state's charter schools to report on academic achievement and other indicators of school quality.—Shirley Rau, School Choice Coordinator



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News Brief

- Two new charters are opening this fall: Welcome Vision Public Charter School of Middleton and Xavier Charter School in Twin Falls!
- In the spring of 2007, the Center for Education Reform recognized the Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy as one of the nation's best charter schools.

Charter School Support Program Training

Successful charter schools are not only well-designed educational programs—they are well run non-profit businesses. In an effort to ensure the success of start-up charter schools, beginning in 2007, the Department will require that all schools re-

ceiving Charter School Program sub-grants develop a training plan in the following project design areas: 1) Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Accountability; 2) Founding and Governance; 3) School Leadership and Management; 4) Business, Fi-

nance and Accounting; 5) Special Populations.

Workshops, on-line seminars and hands-on training will be available throughout the year. Workshops, which will also be open to operating charters, will be publicized in monthly newsletters.

Ten Year Landmark Study of Idaho's Charter Schools Underway

The SDE is partnering with the Northwest Regional Educational Lab (NWREL) in the development and implementation of a statewide study to reflect on growth and quality of Idaho charter schools over the past ten years. The study is slated for completion in September 2008.

An Advisory Committee was formed to begin to define the direction and scope of the study. Shirley Rau coordinated the first conference call. Tom Luna opened the discussion by observing that

Idaho has already passed the time for debate about whether charter schools are valuable in our state. He recommended that the results of the study be used to continue to improve current charter schools and shape the future of charter schools in our state.

Meeting participants agreed. A list of potential questions were generated. The questions fell roughly into 5 categories: 1) overarching questions related to the success of Idaho's charter schools; 2) parent perspectives; 3)

teacher's perspectives; 4) policy issues; and 5) translation of best practices.

The September Idaho Charter School Leadership Council meetings will engage charter school leaders in the survey design and implementation process. All charter school heads and board chairs are encouraged to participate.

"Idaho has already passed the time for debate about whether charter schools are valuable in our state."

Superintendent Tom Luna

Idaho Charter School Leadership Council: Leading for Educational Innovation and Choice

The Charter School Leadership Council was established by the Department to collaborate with charter school leaders and leaders of statewide organizations committed to charter schools to develop an action plan to promote growth and quality among Idaho's charter schools.

Regional Council meetings included charter heads, board chairs, business managers, parent and teacher representatives, as well as representatives of

charter support organizations like the Idaho Charter School Network and the Idaho Coalition of Charter Families. In June and July meetings focused on:

1) Articulating needs and opportunities for promoting growth and quality;
2) Developing clear messaging regarding Idaho's charter schools.

Council members in each region identified areas of expressed need, then prioritized those areas, identifying possi-

ble solutions, challenges, success factors, as well as financial and resource implications. Statewide priorities:

1) Provide more equitable funding
2) Develop public awareness campaign
3) Promote growth and development of quality charter school programs in Idaho
4) Extend innovation to areas such as teacher certification and assessment
5) Streamline state/authorizer paperwork and reporting

Charter School Leadership Council Meeting Dates

September, November, December, February, March and May Council meetings will be held via conference call:

Wednesday—Northern Region, Thursday—Western Region, Friday—Eastern Region. The call will begin at 4 PM and will not exceed one hour. Information regarding calls will be emailed the week prior. Meetings in October and April will be held in each region. January's

meeting will be the pre-legislative Charter School Summit in Boise. June's meeting will be a statewide conference. Dates are tentative and are subject to change.

Sept. 12, 13, 14	Conference Call
Oct. 10	Northern Region
Oct. 11	Southwestern Region
Oct. 12	Southeastern Region
Nov. 7, 8, 9	Conference Call

Dec. 12, 13, 14	Conference Call
January (TBA)	Charter School Summit (Boise)
Feb. 13, 14, 15	Conference Call
March 12, 13, 14	Conference Call
April 9	Southwestern Idaho
April 10	Northern Idaho
April 11	Southeastern Idaho
May 14, 15, 16	Conference Call
June (TBA)	Statewide Meeting

National Charter School News Connection: EPA Fines Seven Tucson Charter Operators \$67,240

Dean Kern, Director of Charter programs, US Department of Education forwarded this news release: *EPA fines seven Tucson charter school operators \$67,240 for asbestos violations* (08/06/07) SAN FRANCISCO -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently fined seven Tucson charter school operators a combined total of \$67,240 for Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act violations. In May 2006, EPA inspectors discovered the school operators all failed to conduct inspections to determine if asbestos-

containing material was present in school buildings and failed to develop asbestos management plans. Accredited inspectors later found asbestos in six of the schools.

All of the schools have since taken necessary actions to comply with the law. Federal law requires schools to conduct an initial inspection using accredited inspectors to determine if asbestos-containing building material is present and develop a management plan to address the asbestos materials found in the school buildings. Schools are also

required to appoint a designated person who is trained to oversee asbestos activities and ensure compliance with federal regulations. Finally, schools must conduct periodic surveillance and re-inspections, properly train the maintenance and custodial staff, and maintain records in the management plan. Local education agencies must keep an updated copy of the management plan in its administrative office. Additional information can be found at http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/asbestos_in_schools.html

Charter School Head Connection: Mentor as Co-Learner

Nationwide research indicates that mentor programs not only improve the quality of teaching, they help retain talented teachers (National Center for Educational Statistics 1999). Mentoring is no longer seen as an option; it's an essential part of staff development and a part of envisioning schools as professional learning communities. At many schools mentoring has been facilitated through an informal process of collabora-

tion on grade level teaching teams and conversations at the copy machine or after school. While these conversations are rich and meaningful, all teachers benefit from a process that is more systematized and that ensures regular ongoing support, particularly for new and beginning teachers. Avoid the "extreme makeover" approach to mentoring. This encourages mindless adoption and application of teaching strate-

gies that can later be abandoned because teachers don't own the thinking behind the strategies. Mentoring is a partnership—two people learning together, reflecting on how children learn. Teachers are all on a journey as learners—there is no map—there are compasses—there is territory that has been explored—but there is no correct destination. The goal is to promote real dialogue about children and learning.

Why Effective Charter School Boards Are Critical To The Success Of The Charter School Movement

The ability of the charter school to carry out its mission and vision depend on the strength of its organizational foundation. A critical element of this foundation is the charter school board itself. The board carries the mission of the school into the community and brings the views of the community into the school. Its importance to the health of the charter school and its

financial base is primary.

Charter schools, after all, are organizations. While charter schools can be organized in different ways, increasingly they exist as independent, freestanding entities apart from the traditional public school system. If we see a future for charter schools within the broader movement of school reform in America, we need to see ourselves as building

organizations that will last, organizations that are healthy, thriving, and continuously learning and improving -- organizations that are capable of sustaining dramatic improvements in student achievement. The charter school governing board is a critical element in developing this kind of organization.

Charter school boards will be one of (continued on page 4)

Idaho State Dept of Education

Shirley A. Rau
School Choice Coordinator
208-332-6963
sarau@sde.idaho.gov

Lori Howard
Administrative Assistant
208-332-6902
lahoward@sde.idaho.gov

P.O. Box 83720
650 West State Street
Boise, Idaho 83702
Fax: 208-334-4664

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the important places where a new generation of school leadership develops and strengthens its skill base. These leaders will have impact within the charter schools on whose boards they serve, and they can have impact beyond charter schools in the broader community. Specifically charter schools need boards for the following reasons:

Boards fulfill a legal responsibility. A board of directors is a legal requirement for a charter school organized as a nonprofit corporation. Charter

schools, as public schools, serve the public and do not operate for any individual's personal gain, and they are eligible for special treatment, such as tax exemptions. The charter school is required to have a governing board to ensure that its operations continue to focus on serving the public.

Boards provide oversight functions.

In exchange for direct and indirect financial assistance from the state and federal governments, state charter school legislation, as well as nonprofit corporation law, requires that a group of individuals voluntarily serve on a board of directors and act as guardians of the "public trust." This structure makes the school's management accountable to a diverse group of people who have the general interest of the charter school at heart, are not directly involved in the operational activities of the school, and, due to the voluntary nature of the board, can effectively provide financial oversight since no personal financial gain is involved. The ability of the board to remain objective is critical to its effectiveness in guiding the charter school.

Boards promote the charter school's

mission. In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, a charter school needs a board of directors composed of individuals who support the school's mission, believe in it, and seek to promote it. Advocating for the charter school and its educational philosophy is an important function of the board and involves promoting the mission and goals of the charter school within the community and with the wider educational reform arena.

Boards help to raise funds. The ability to raise funds is an important measure of a board's effectiveness in serving a charter school. Board directors who are influential in the community can often successfully elicit major contributions from a variety of private and business sources. Building an active group of financial supporters who regularly donate money to the charter school will increase the resources available to implement the educational program, making it easier for the charter school to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.

Excerpted from *Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board Guidebook*—see full document at www.uscharterschools.org/gb/org.

Charter Start! A New School Development Program

The State Department of Education is partnering with the Idaho Charter School Network to develop the *Charter Start!* program designed to provide direct services to charter developers and to charter schools that are eligible for federal start-up funds.

The program will provide guidance through the chartering process—from conception to implementation—and will provide ongoing support through the first 2 years of operation.

Pre-planning: Charter School 101

Introduction to charter schools—What are they? What are the opportunities for developers? Authorizers?

Public Education? A Charter Start! 101 workshop is scheduled in Boise on September 28 from 9AM-4 PM.

Stage I -

Steering Committee Development

- Business Plan Development
- Building Board Capacity
- Education Program Design
- Introduction to Accountability Fundamentals

General Technical Support Stage II -

Building Strategic Capacity

- Tech Infrastructure Orientation
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Business Plan Review

General Technical Support Stage III -

Application Completion and Submission

- Governance 101
- Quality and Accountability
- Finance
- Policy Development
- Application Review and Feedback
- Mock Hearings and Preparation
- General Technical Support

Pre-Opening Support Stage IV -

- Accountability Training for School Leadership
- School Policies
- Leadership Hiring/Training
- General Technical Support
- Start-up Financial Practices
- Governance Review